

Message Text

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ACTION AID-59

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

PA-03 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 PM-07 NSC-10 SS-15 SR-02

ORM-03 RSR-01 IO-13 EUR-25 EB-11 /188 W

----- 111907

R 171030Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6093

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E.O. N/A

TAGS: SREF, VS

SUBJ: NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE: RESETTLEMENT OF PEOPLE IN DELTA
REGION

REF: STATE 152620

1. IN JAN 73, THE GVN WAS IN POSSESSION OF VOLUMINOUS INFORMATION FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES THAT THE COMMUNISTS WERE PLANNING EXTENSIVE "LANDGRAB" OPERATIONS IN MILITARY REGION 4. MR-4 COMMANDER, MAJOR GENERAL NGUYEN VAN NGHI, WAS ORDERED TO COUNTER COMMUNIST ATTACKS AND PROTECT THE MORE THAN SIX MILLION PEOPLE LIVING IN THE SIXTEEN DELTA PROVINCES.

2. AMONG OTHER PRECAUTIONS HIS STAFF DEVELOPED A PLAN TO RE-Locate 27,680 PERSONS IN SEVEN PROVINCES. CURRENT ESTIMATES BY US MISSION FIELD PERSONNEL ARE THAT 17,110 PERSONS WERE ACTUALLY RELOCATED. GENERAL NGHI ESTIMATES THAT ONLY 8,000 WERE MOVED. EXCEPT FOR 100 FAMILIES, ALL RELOCATIONS WERE COMPLETED DURING THE PERIOD JAN-APR 73.

3. THE USG WAS REQUESTED THROUGH NORMAL CHANNELS TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO RELOCATION PROGRAM. REQUEST WAS DISAPPROVED BECAUSE US AID MISSION FIELD PERSONNEL FELT THAT ON BALANCE RELOCATIONS WERE NOT ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY, ALTHOUGH, IN RETROSPECT, IT

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SEEMS CERTAIN THAT HAD SUCH AID BEEN FURNISHED, MANY OF THOSE

WHO RETURNED TO MORE EXPOSED POSITIONS PROBABLY WOULD HAVE REMAINED HAD GENERAL NGHI BEEN ABLE TO AFFORD THEM PROMPT ASSISTANCE. GENERAL NGHI CARRIED OUT AS MUCH OF PROGRAM AS HE COULD USING OTHER RESOURCES. INCLUDED WAS SOME ROOFING MATERIAL DONATED BY AUSTRALIA AND CANADA. PROVISION OF RICE AND BUILDING MATERIALS PROBABLY KEYED TO IMMEDIATE NEEDS OF PEOPLE FOR FOOD AND SHELTER RATHER THAN TO SENATE ELECTIONS.

4. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT ALL RELOCATIONS WERE LIMITED IN DISTANCE TO LESS THAN TEN KILOMETERS. MOST WERE UNDER TWO KILOMETERS. MAJORITY OF FAMILIES CONTINUED TO FARM THEIR FIELDS EVEN AFTER RELOCATION. PURPOSE OF RELOCATIONS WAS TO CONCENTRATE POPULATION SO THAT LIMITED NUMBER OF TROOPS COULD PROVIDE MAXIMUM SECURITY. POPULATION DESIROUS OF SECURITY BUT UNDERSTANDABLY RELUCTANT TO LEAVE THEIR HOMES EMPTY. PROBABILITY IS THAT A NUMBER OF THE PEOPLE MOVED DID TELL SOLDIERS THAT THEY WANTED MORE SECURITY AND WERE WILLING TO MOVE, TEMPORARILY. OTHERS UNDOUBTEDLY TOLD AMERICANS THAT THEY WERE VERY RELUCTANT TO ABANDON THEIR ANCESTRAL HOMES.

5. AS SOON AS MR-4 COMMANDER JUDGED SECURITY SITUATION WARRANTED IT, HE STOPPED RELOCATIONS. MANY OF THE PEOPLE ARE NOW MOVING BACK INTO OLD AREAS. GVN IN MR-4 AS IN OTHER AREAS OF COUNTRY DESIROUS OF GETTING AS MANY PEOPLE BACK WORKING THEIR OWN LAND AS POSSIBLE.

6. REPORT REQUESTED PARA 3 REFTEL BEING POUCHED.

7. COMMENT: GVN POLICY STATES THAT, QUOTE POPULATION RELOCATION MUST BE LIMITED TO A MINIMUM AS OUR MAIN OBJECTIVE REMAINS ONE OF BRINGING SECURITY TO THE PEOPLE INSTEAD OF MOVING PEOPLE TO SECURE AREAS UNQUOTE. OBVIOUSLY IN THIS INSTANCE GENERAL NGHI, UNDER THE CONDITIONS HE COULD REASONABLY EXPECT IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE CEASEFIRE, FELT THAT SECURITY COULD NOT BE PROVIDED WITHOUT SOME RELOCATION. AT PRESENT TIME, HOWEVER, HIS ACTIONS APPEAR TO BE CONSISTENT WITH GVN POLICY.

8. THE TREASTER ARTICLE, WHILE ESSENTIALLY ACCURATE IN ITS BASIC FACTS, IS NOT CORRECT AS TO MOTIVATIONS NOR DOES IT PRESENT THE ACTUAL ESTIMATES UNDERLYING EVERY ACTION ALTHOUGH HE WAS AWARE OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THEM. THEREFORE, THE TONE OF THE ARTICLE, IMPLYING AS USUAL THE HEARTLESS MANIPULATION OF THE PEASANTS BY AN OPPRESSIVE GVN, IS SIMPLY NOT TRUE. IF THE REMARKS ATTRIBUTED TO THE UNNAMED AMERICAN OFFICIALS ACTUALLY WERE MADE AT ALL, IT SEEMS CLEAR OFFICIAL WAS OFFERING POLITICAL JUDGEMENTS HE WAS OBVIOUSLY NOT QUALIFIED TO MAKE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SAIGON14902
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730831/aaaaawlm.tel
Line Count: 114
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION AID
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: STATE 152620
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 SEP 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07-Sep-2001 by thigpegh>; APPROVED <28-Dec-2001 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE: RESETTLEMENT OF PEOPLE IN DELTA REGION
TAGS: SREF, VS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005